

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Crook

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114256
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325977
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Sharkey

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	191
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr William Laws
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Hill Crook County Durham DL15 9DN
Telephone number	01388 762889
Fax number	01388 762889

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is a smaller than average primary serving an area of social and economic disadvantage. The school opened in September 2008 in a new building which includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) unit. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average and most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School provides a good education for its pupils and some aspects of its work are outstanding. It has improved well since its last inspection. The school's very caring approach is securely based on Christian values with the aim of ensuring that pupils feel safe, secure and valued. This reflects the outstanding provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is a vibrant community providing a purposeful environment in which pupils behave well. This contributes to their outstanding personal development. Parents are positive in their praise, a typical comment being, 'We are so pleased to have our children in such a good school, they look forward to going to school every day.' Pupils develop skills and confidence that prepare them very well for future learning and life as a young adult. The school gives good value for money.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children make an excellent start in the EYFS so that they enter Year 1 with standards in line with those expected for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2 to reach above average standards by the time they leave. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported extremely well, often by skilled teaching assistants. This accounts for their good achievement, which is better than that of similar pupils nationally.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy through regular exercise and good diet. The excellent programme for physical education includes a wide range of after-school activities, including dance and gymnastics. Good relationships between staff and pupils underpin the good behaviour. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of taking responsibility in the school and wider communities.

Teaching and learning are good, especially in the EYFS and at Key Stage 2. Lessons are well prepared and take into account the different learning needs of the pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their natural enthusiasm engages pupils in the learning. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is a real strength across the school and teachers use this with confidence and flair to help pupils learn. This is reflected in the good standard of pupils' skills in ICT, and the award of the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) ICT Mark. A broad and creative curriculum gives pupils extensive opportunities to develop their awareness of the cultural diversity of modern Britain and the wider world, giving learning a clear purpose and context. For example, during the inspection the school welcomed visitors from Slovakia, India and Tanzania and pupils enjoyed learning through music, dance and art. The care, guidance and support for pupils is good overall, including academic guidance. Targets are set for pupils' future learning, but pupils are not always clear about what they have to do to meet them. This is because teachers' marking is not always focused on the targets set so that guidance is not specific enough. Marking does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is well supported by her staff and governing body and all are committed to raising standards. Together they are clear about what needs to be improved so that the quality of pupil's learning is getting better all the time. The governors provide effective guidance and keep a good balance between offering support to the school and challenging it to do better. The school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision in the EYFS is outstanding and gives children an excellent start in their personal, social and emotional development. Children enter the EYFS with levels of skills and understanding that are below what is typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy which is often low. They flourish in their Nursery and Reception years, sharing space and resources in this new setting, and make good and often excellent progress. By the time they enter Year 1 they have reached the expected levels of knowledge, skills and understanding for their age. This is because learning activities are very carefully focused on developing their personal, social and academic qualities, based on very secure assessment procedures. An outstanding feature is in the confidence, cooperation and ownership children display in their learning indoors and out. For example, children talked knowledgeably about why they were wearing hard hats whilst cementing bricks, and discussed the pattern of brick-laying. Parents speak very favourably about the good progress their children make. Children behave extremely well and thoroughly enjoy the many excellent opportunities to learn. There is an excellent balance between activities that are led by teachers and those that children choose for themselves. By learning to listen, share and take turns, children are very well prepared for their future education. Leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding, exemplified by high expectations and the well-tailored curriculum designed to meet each child's needs. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children's welfare needs are fully catered for. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellently supported by teaching assistants and achieve well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' marking tells pupils regularly what they have achieved and the next steps they need to take to improve.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about their own specific targets to help them reach the next stage in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and achievement is good. Assessments in 2008 showed that pupils built effectively on their skills and knowledge in Key Stage 1 to reach average levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The school feels that recorded assessments are now more accurate, reversing an apparently falling trend. Over the last 5 years, results in Key Stage 2 for English have been steadily rising and standards for English, mathematics and science were significantly above the national average in 2007. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and occasionally exceptional progress towards the targets set for learning. The end-of-year provisional results for Key Stage 2 in 2008 indicate that pupils have continued to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and this is an important element in their good academic progress and achievement. This is a very happy school where pupils genuinely care for each other. The established school 'Buddy System', where older pupils support younger or

more vulnerable pupils, works very well to ensure all feel secure. Pupils are extremely kind and polite; they behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning. Levels of attendance are now good and pupil punctuality is improving. Pupils keep themselves fit through regular exercise in school and they clearly understand the importance of healthy eating. Pupils make excellent contributions to the wider and global communities through their support of local and national charities, the church and the school's international links. In recognition of this, the school holds The International Schools Award. Pupils voice their opinions confidently through the school council where they gain an impressive understanding of citizenship. They are proud of their decision to help improve the environment and their own health through the provision of cycle racks.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Progress is good because teaching is good. A positive feature of all lessons is the good relationships staff have with their pupils, which ensures pupils behave well and have very good attitudes to their work. Teachers plan lessons well and creatively, ensuring that a variety of methods are used to provide challenge and excitement for pupils. In lessons where learning is good, pace and rigour are maintained and this ensures that lessons flow smoothly. However, the pace of learning is sometimes slow in Key Stage 1 and this lessens pupils' progress. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally effective, but not all marking explains to pupils how they can improve their work. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to children's learning, they are well trained and are fully integrated into the staff team. Provision in lessons for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and accounts for their good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets requirements and takes account of national initiatives and guidance. The wealth of visitors and extended opportunities available to pupils significantly enhance their learning. For example, a Year 2 class enjoyed learning an African dance led by a visiting teacher from Tanzania. Pupils also have the opportunity to enjoy an extensive, stimulating range of extra-curricular activities. The improving standards that pupils are now achieving in English and mathematics is well supported by the increased range of opportunities that they have to practise these basic skills in other subjects. Provision in ICT is outstanding and is a strength of the school. Pupils from Years 3 to 6 have the opportunity to learn French and the oldest pupils in school enjoy a residential visit to Paris where they experience this different culture. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is carefully planned and tailored to their needs and circumstances. Opportunities are taken to link subjects together to make learning more meaningful for the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and all the required procedures for safeguarding, including child protection, are in place. Relationships throughout the school are very good, and pupils confirm that they feel safe and happy knowing that any problems that they face will be dealt with appropriately. The school has excellent links with outside agencies which

provide good support for vulnerable pupils that is tailored to their individual needs. Academic guidance is good overall, and promotes good progress in learning. Although targets are used, pupils are not always clear about their individual learning targets and what they have to do to meet them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear vision of what the school needs to do to improve. The senior management team, governors and staff work well together as a team to raise standards and set a good tone and atmosphere for learning. Governance is good. The governors are well informed about all aspects of school life and carry out their monitoring role and challenge with enthusiasm and commitment. The school's system for checking the quality of teaching and learning is good. Subject leaders are appropriately focused on developing their monitoring role to ensure that pupils' progress in all subjects is tracked rigorously to improve provision for pupils. The school values links with the local community and, through the strong international partnerships, the contribution to community cohesion is excellent. Parents have a positive view about the school. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Crook, Durham,
DL15 9DN

We are writing to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your brand new school. We were amazed at how much space you had and were fascinated by the way you were able to hide away your coats and bags! We really enjoyed talking to you and have good memories of how friendly you are, not just towards us but also towards each other and your teachers. We were impressed with how keen you were to talk, telling us about your many activities. I need a new wall in my garden and wondered if some of the younger children could build this for me or lend me one of their hard hats so I don't get hurt? We were delighted to be in your school at the same time as your international visitors from Europe and Africa and congratulate you on your art work in the atrium, showing different African styles. We think yours is a good school where you achieve well because the school is well led and managed.

We looked at other parts of school life, including how teachers help you to understand about being healthy. When we asked you about this you were so good at telling us how much you knew about the importance of healthy food, regular exercise and how to keep safe that we thought this was outstanding.

We enjoyed spending time in each of your classrooms, not just watching you learning inside, although that was good, but outside as well. Your teachers work very hard and they are going to do more things to help you improve your learning. First, they will add more helpful comments when they mark your work so that this will help you to know how to further improve. Second, they will make sure that you understand your own targets and how you can achieve them.

Thank you for all your help; we know how proud the school is of all you do. Well done and we hope you all continue to enjoy being in a good school.

Best wishes

Sue Sharkey and Alan Sergison

Inspectors